



# BUILDING HEALTHY EATING HABITS for young children



## Tips For Healthy Eating Habits



- ◆ Provide a healthy meal or snack every 2 ½ or 3 hours instead of snacking throughout the day
- ◆ Try 'family style' meals and put food into larger serving dishes on the table where everyone serves themselves
- ◆ Let your child feed themselves
- ◆ Allow your child to say "no thank you" or "more please"
- ◆ Keep a meal and snack routine
- ◆ Let your child choose what and how much to eat from the foods you offer
- ◆ Patience is better than pressure; if you say or do something to get your child to eat, it is likely a form of pressure
- ◆ Let your child leave the table when they are full; about 15 to 20 minutes is enough time to eat
- ◆ It is helpful to use serving utensils and pitchers that are easy for small hands to handle and that provide an appropriate serving size
- ◆ Enjoy eating together



### You Decide:

- What foods to offer
- When to offer meals and snacks
- Where your child will eat

### Trust Your Child To Decide:

- Which foods to eat
- How much to eat

# What To Avoid



Accept and celebrate that healthy bodies come in all shapes and sizes. Help your child eat well, be active and feel good about themselves.

## Avoid Less Healthy and Processed Foods

- ◆ Restricting less healthy foods can make children eat more of them when available
- ◆ Once in a while, offer a less healthy food item as part of a meal
- ◆ Avoid calling foods “good” or “bad” – you can call foods “everyday foods” and “sometimes foods”
- ◆ Highly processed foods often have lots of sodium, sugar or saturated fat, including sodas, chocolate, candy, chips, processed meats and frozen meals

## Avoid Pressure/Restrictions

- ◆ Pressure includes reminding your child to eat, punishing them for not eating or offering rewards for eating
- ◆ Avoid pressuring, restricting or controlling your child to eat more or less food

## Avoid Diets\*

Diets can interfere with children’s normal growth and development. Children know when they are hungry and when they are full.

- ◆ Restricting your child’s food often backfires and may make them feel bad about themselves
- ◆ Children who are afraid of going hungry may over-eat



Connect with a public health nurse at Niagara Parents



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